

## Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

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TO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: SHUM, SOPN, PK, US

SUBJECT:HUMAN RIGHTS IN PAKISTAN - PRESS BRIEFING

1. THE FOLLOWING EXCHANGE TOOK PLACE AT THE NOON PRESS  
BRIEFING ON MARCH 23:

Q: YOUR COUNTRY REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS SAYS THAT IN  
PAKISTAN THE MILITARY REGIME OF GENERAL ZIA-UL-HAQ HAS  
MADE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD.  
NOW SINCE THE ZIA REGIME WAS REPORTED THIS MORNING AS  
CONDUCTING PUBLIC HANGINGS, AS WELL AS ANNOUNCING THEIR  
INTENTION TO CUT OFF THE HANDS OF THIEVES; AND SINCE THEY  
HAVE CLOSED DOWN A LEADING PAKISTANI NEWSPAPER -- I WAS  
WONDERING IF THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAS A STRONG STATEMENT  
ON THIS SUPPRESSION OF THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS, AS IT  
DID ALMOST INSTANTLY WHEN THE VOERSTER GOVERNMENT CLOSED  
DOWN A BLACK NEWSPAPER IN JOHANNESBURG.

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A: NO, I DON'T HAVE ANY KIND OF A STATEMENT, STRONG OR  
OTHERWISE.

Q: DOES THE SECRETARY BELIEVE THAT THE PRESS FREEDOM  
FOR PAKISTANIS IS, FOR SOME REASON, LESS IMPORTANT THAN  
PRESS FREEDOM FOR THE BLACKS IN SOUTH AFRICA?

A: NO

Q: WELL THEN, WHY ISN'T THERE A STATEMENT INSTANTLY ON THIS CLOSING DOWN OF A HUGE NEWSPAPER IN PAKISTAN, COULD YOU EXPLAIN THAT? I REMEMBER ALMOST INSTANTLY AFTER THE WORLD WAS CLOSED IN AND KABOTIA WAS BANNED -- IT WAS IMMEDIATELY PROTESTED FROM THIS PODIUM. AND WELL, GOOD. NOW THE QUESTION IS: WHY NOT WHEN A PAKISTANI PAPER IS CLOSED? THEY ARE HANGING PEOPLE AND WANTING TO CUT OFF PEOPLE'S HANDS.

A: YOU ARE TRYING TO MAKE AN EXACT PARALLEL BETWEEN SITUATIONS THAT ARE NOT EXACTLY PARALLEL. THAT WOULD BE ONE ANSWER. THE OTHER ANSWER WOULD BE THAT I AM NOT EXCLUDING THAT AND WE WILL MAKE A STATEMENT ABOUT THAT AT SOME POINT.

Q: TELL ME THIS, JOHN. WHY DO YOU SAY THAT IT'S NOT EXACTLY PARALLEL? DO YOU MEAN IT'S BECAUSE PAKISTAN IS SOME DISTANCE FROM SOUTH AFRICA? THIS IS THE SUPPRESSION OF A NEWSPAPER. THEY WERE BOTH NEWSPAPERS OF FAIRLY WIDE CIRCULATION. WHY IS IT NOT ---

A: WELL, I DON'T KNOW THE DETAILS OF THE CLOSING OF THE

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PAPER YOU MENTIONED. I HAVE NOT SEEN ANY REPORTS OF THAT. SO THAT WOULD BE ONE REASON I WOULD STATE THAT I DON'T SEE AN EXACT PARALLEL. WE DID KNOW THE DETAILS FAIRLY QUICKLY IN THE OTHER SITUATION.

Q: RIGHT. IS IT POSSIBLE YOU COULD TAKE THIS? I MEAN IS THERE ANY INDICATION THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT WILL SAY ANYTHING ABOUT THIS?

A: YES, I WILL HAVE TO LOOK INTO IT. I AM NOT AWARE OF THE SITUATION, AS I SAID.

Q: JOHN, I SEE BY THE SCHEDULE THAT THE SECRETARY IS SEEING A MR. SHAHI, WHO IS AN AIDE OF GENERAL ZIA. IS THIS WITH THE ALI BHUTTO CASE?

A: NO, THIS IS NOT RELATED TO THE ALI BHUTTO CASE.

Q: DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING ON THAT CASE AT ALL?

A: NO, NOTHING OTHER THAN THAT. IT'S A CALL, I THINK, TO DISCUSS OTHER ASPECTS OF RELATIONS BETWEEN US AND

THE PAKISTANIS, BUT IT IS NOT RELATED TO THAT CASE.

2. THE FOLLOWING ANSWER TO QUERY WAS POSTED ON MARCH 24:

Q: WHAT COMMENT DO YOU HAVE ON THE PUBLIC EXECUTIONS  
IN PAKISTAN AND THE CLOSING OF A PAKISTANI NEWSPAPER?

A: -- WE WOULD NOTE THAT THOSE EXECUTED WERE CONVICTED  
OF THE CRIME OF RAPE, OUR INFORMATION INDICATES THEY  
WERE TRIED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LAWS IN FORCE IN  
PAKISTAN.

-- WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE NEWSPAPER HAS BEEN TEMPORARILY  
CLOSED UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF MARTIAL LAW NOW IN FORCE IN  
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PAKISTAN.

-- WE OF COURSE CONTINUE TO FOLLOW EVENTS IN PAKISTAN  
CAREFULLY. VANCE

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## Message Attributes

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